829 5) War Experiences Many younger and even middle-aged men saw ser-
926 vice in the war, some in Manchuria, China, and Southeast Asia. Their experiences of course varied. One well-educated man told me how pleasant he found Burma and how much he would like to return there as a civilian; he had been in the Japanese Military Government there. Others returned from the war to tell of terrible experiences. One story, which was said to be well-known around Itoman, told how an Okinawan whose unit was making a last stand deserted to surrender to the Americans when he was warned by a friend that as an Okinawan he had been chosen to go into the pot for dinner.

824 On the home front old people, women, and children were able to see the army at first hand during the last few months before the battle, when many units prepared to defend the island. Many civilians saw the harsh army discipline and saw, we were told, how when army rations became short the officers continued to eat well while the men had to loot from the fields of the civilians. They remember the Korean labor units, some of whom in the south were detailed to cut the Okinawan farmers' trees to build defenses. They also remember the 'Chōsen-P', the Korean girls brought by the Japanese army to serve as prostitutes for the men; some informants believed the Japanese army's system of army brothels to be superior to the policy of the American army.

In general the present Okinawan view of the late Japanese army is not a flattering one. But it must be emphasized that most informants seemed quick to distinguish between the Japanese army and Japanese civilians, army policy and national culture.

177 829 6) The Present Scene The Japanese government's present display of
[724] interest in Okinawa, as seen for example in the recent granting of pensions to survivors of war dead, the renewed interest of Japanese scholars in Okinawan culture, and the movie industry's "Okinawa boom" have made an impression on the Okinawans. The government's interest may be mainly political; the interest of the scholars, however, is genuine, and the reasons for the
829 movie boom too may run deeper than propaganda considerations. Okinawa was
726 the only part of Japan, the only one of the forty-six prefectures, that was
177 actually defended against a landing. The people of Okinawa were the only Japanese who fought to protect their homeland from invasion. And thus the people of Okinawa-ken showed the greatest heroism of any Japanese. This, potentially, is the argument that may one day raise the status of Okinawans to great heights in the Japanese scheme of things, apart from any conscious policy on the part of the Japanese government. Many Okinawans may be well aware of their latent heroism as a group. What they actually did go through as individuals must not be minimized and may well motivate some to try to derive some reward from it. (I must admit that this is speculation; I have not been told by any Okinawans that they are, or might be considered to be, the most heroic of the Japanese, but I believe that this interpretation is inherent in the situation.)

170 On the other hand, the differentiating treatment that Okinawans met
829 in Japan in the past is still there too. Recently a volleyball team went to Japan, where, it is said, the first meal served them consisted of bread while the Japanese teams around them were served rice. When they objected they were told that it was understood that the Okinawans had become wholly Americanized